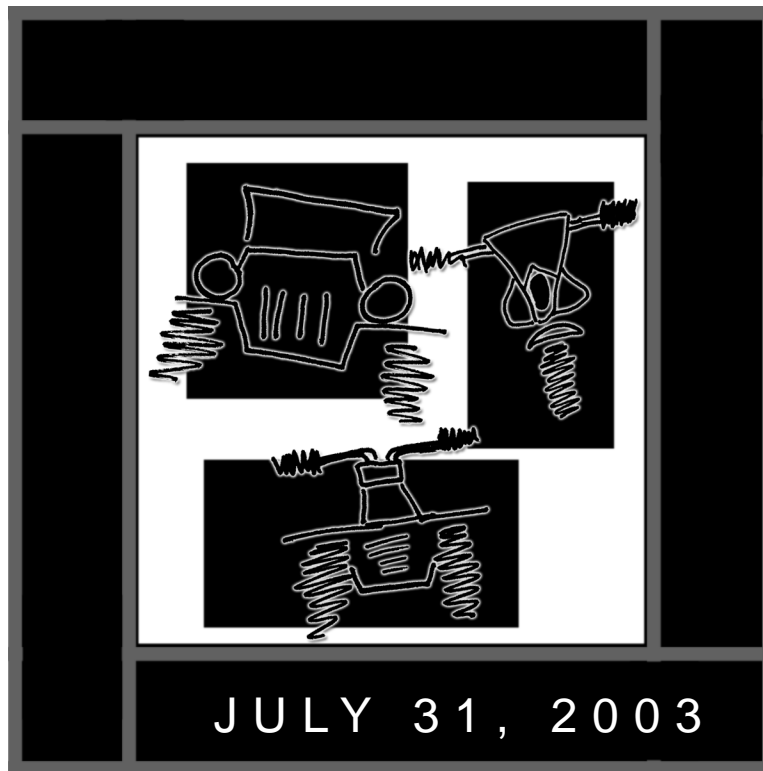


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



LOST RIVER RECREATION TRAILWAY ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL



Introduction

Since 1995 the number of registered Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) in Idaho has increased over three hundred percent. In response to that growth trend and the need for an expanded knowledge base concerning the management of OHV use in Idaho, The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) is proposing a joint effort with federal and state agencies, cities, counties, and various interest groups to develop an Off Highway Vehicle Adaptive Management Plan for the Lost River Basin area.

The goal of this management proposal is to improve management of OHV use in the region through a partnership Memorandum of Agreement with land management agencies that outlines our mutual goals for OHV management in the region and management resources available to each participating agency. It is anticipated that combining agency resources will better address the challenge, including the designation of a small portion of the vast inventory of routes currently open to OHV use in the area, as a Recreational Trailway.

An analysis of existing roads and OHV trails will be used to develop an inventory of pertinent base-line data, used as foundation for developing management alternatives for federal and state agencies. In addition, this proposal will provide a focused and managed designated OHV trail system designed to help accommodate an ever increasing number of OHV enthusiasts in the state, and to provide opportunities for rural communities to diversify their economies by providing recreation services to trail users.

IDPR is proposing to designate approximately ± 500 miles of existing roads and trails currently open to OHV

use in the area through a phased approach. The initial phase would include a ± 300 mile main loop with subsequent miles of side loops and spurs added to the system later, based on the recommendations of a local Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) with oversight from the Agency Steering Committee. The proposed trail system includes lands located on Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Forest Service (USFS), Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), Custer, and Butte County roads into a designated Recreational Trailway. This trailway would encompass a one-mile wide management corridor on either side of the designated route, with management of the area within the corridor included in the proposal. A review of the management area shows that the proposed route would include portions of the Challis and Salmon National Forests, two different BLM districts, the road rights of way of three communities and two county highway departments.

In the past, it has been the practice of both state and federal agencies to disperse use on the trails as use increased, or where resource impacts became an issue. This practice has served the state well up until recent years. The rapid growth in OHV use across Idaho, and in particular all terrain vehicles (ATV's), has mandated that a different approach be taken in some areas.

USFS Chief Dale Bosworth framed the issue well in a speech he delivered on April 22nd, 2003, "The issue is this: Back when we had light recreational use, we didn't need to manage it; but now that it's heavier, we do.....At one time, we didn't manage the use of off-highway vehicles, either. OHVs are a great way to experience the outdoors, and only a tiny fraction of the users leave lasting traces by going cross-country. But the number

of people who own OHVs has just exploded in recent years. In 2000, it reached almost 36 million. Even a tiny percentage of impact from all those millions of users is still a lot of impact. Each year, we get hundreds of miles of what we euphemistically refer to as “unplanned roads and trails. So the great issue is unmanaged recreation.”. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, as the State Agency tasked with the responsibility for managing the operation of OHVs in Idaho, believes that the Department can assist with the additional management efforts needed to meet the challenge of managing growing OHV use through the following steps.



Planning

In 2001, IDPR began looking at a possible route in the Lost River Basin that would link the communities of Challis, Mackay, and Arco, utilizing existing routes already open to OHVs. The concept; by providing a quality managed riding opportunity for OHV users that incorporates scenic routes with wayside rest stops and an interpretive tour of Idaho’s rich mining history into a designated trail system, land management agencies could direct or offer OHV users a trail system that could be better maintained and managed with an emphasis on education, responsible

use, and compliance with travel restrictions. This adaptive management proposal is patterned after several other case studies throughout the United States, including the Paiute trail system in central Utah, the Grand Staircase Escalante in southern Utah, and the Hatfield-McCoy trail system in West Virginia. These and other similar trail systems have shown that resource impacts can be minimized when users know and understand where they can or cannot recreate, and where land managers can better focus their efforts. In addition, these systems are popular for Adopt-A-Trail programs with user groups, which lends these types of highly managed OHV Corridor Trail Systems to a sense of ownership among user groups, and therefore better awareness and compliance by those users.

In April of 2002, a letter was sent to concerned persons and entities outlining what IDPR proposed and to solicit initial responses to the proposed action.

After potential routes of existing roads and trails were identified, IDPR personnel spent the summer of 2002 ground “truthing” the trail to ensure that the information on the maps was an accurate reflection of what was actually on the ground.

The Public Input Process

A series of public meetings sponsored by IDPR were held early in 2003, in Challis, Mackay, Arco, Idaho Falls, Hailey, and Pocatello respectively. The purpose of these meetings was to present the concept of an adaptive management strategy on a designated OHV trail system to the public, solicit response, collect input on ways to improve agency approaches to OHV management, and to seek comment on

the proposed area being considered.

IDPR requested written comments from the public to identify specific issues, and how public agencies might better address OHV management issues. Concerns for wildlife was the issue most often mentioned. The second most often mentioned concern was enforcement, or more specifically, the lack there of, and user compliance efforts for current and future use. Following closely behind enforcement concerns, were a variety of concerns for resource impacts.

Other management issues identified during the public input process include; noxious weed control, adequate funding for the designated trail system, the extent of county resources needed, litter control, trespassing on private lands, the size of the initial start up project and the proposed route, proximity to Wilderness Study Areas, as well as other comments regarding the use of OHVs on public lands.

After reviewing the written comments, as well as those voiced at the public meetings, IDPR brought potential new issues/concerns to a steering committee comprised of staff from the BLM, IDFG, USFS, and officials from the respective counties. These representatives, along with IDPR staff, then sat down to assess what could be done to address some of those concerns in the IDPR proposal. The proposed route includes the deletion of some sections of the trail, and the relocation of other

sections, to help minimize impacts with private land ownership. The issues that surfaced in the public input process were given consideration in our planning efforts, and will continue to be considered as future management strategies when the designated trail system is developed.



Base Line Data Collection

It became clear during the public input process that base-line inventory information was needed on existing conditions within the project area. This information will prove invaluable when monitoring the outcome of applied management actions. Changes have occurred over time to the resources and landscape, that have altered experiences and affected communities. The steering committee helped to identify pertinent issues that need to be assessed, and in response IDPR began collecting base line data on the following areas of concern.

Wildlife Habitat

There is concern for wintering big-game habitat and sage-grouse leks. With the assistance from both IDFG and the Mackay USFS office, a map of all known big-game wintering grounds and sage-grouse leks along the proposed route was collected. This information will be used to monitor possible effects of OHV use of routes designated near these areas, and mitigate those impacts if and when required.

Noxious Weeds

Another piece of information collected was an inventory of noxious weeds within the project area, and their proximity to the proposed route. This will enable IDPR and other agencies to monitor the effects of increased OHV use on the route, and provide ways to manage those changes. In addition to monitoring noxious weeds in the area, IDPR is proposing to include OHV washing facilities in Mackay, Arco, and Challis, for OHV users before they access the trail system. This will assist the efforts to reduce the introduction of noxious weeds to new areas.



Dispersed Use

A concern regarding the proposed trail is that with increased use, there might be more pioneered roads and trails in an area that already has an excess of both. IDPR believes that focusing the use in a more heavily managed designated system of trails will alleviate some of those pioneered routes. As an agency, we have collected a GPS database of all roads and trails that branch off of the proposed designated trails within a mile corridor of either side of the trail. This data will enable land managers to evaluate use impacts on the designated trail system in the future, and develop management specific strategies to minimize cross country route proliferation within the Recreation Trailway Corridor.

Current Use

As part of the base-line data collection, levels of use will be monitored on the existing routes. Since the vast majority of this “trail” is already open to full size vehicle traffic, it is important to see what the current level of use is. To accomplish this task, IDPR purchased twelve traffic counters and placed them in July of 2003, complete with seismic sensors to better understand use trends. The BLM purchased an additional seven units, and these nineteen units have been strategically placed throughout the area where the trail system is proposed. These units will record information around the clock, and IDPR and BLM staff will collect that information weekly, bi-monthly, or as schedules permit. This data will enable IDPR, as well as other agencies and entities, to better understand existing use trends and patterns, and more comprehensively evaluate how that use might change with the proposed trail.

Economic Data

A critical component of the proposed trail system is the potential economic diversification impact it may have on the communities that it links. Therefore, another aspect of information that IDPR is in the process of collecting is economic indicators of the communities and counties that are within the project area. Aided by the Idaho Departments of Labor, Commerce and a Regional Labor Economist, information regarding the number of registered businesses, average annual incomes, land values, employment rates, and

other pertinent information is being collected. This data will also allow us to make better future management decisions regarding the trail system.

The data collection process will be an ongoing effort, and will assist future decision makers as they evaluate management actions and outcomes. Monitoring would be accomplished through a combined effort of agency representatives, and the Citizen Advisory Committee. The CAC would review performance information on an annual basis and make recommendations for changes in management strategies to agency staff, who would then implement those changes deemed necessary to address those issues.

Coordination

Inter-Agency Steering Committee

A steering committee comprised of members from IDPR, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and county officials has been meeting to discuss the proposal, seek agency input from those attending about what sort of management options were available, and how potential issues could be addressed. An initial “main loop” of roughly 300 miles has been identified, and approximately 200 additional miles of side loops and spurs and connector trails have been identified for additional review, to comprise the proposed system **(Appendix I. The most current proposed map is available, in full size, at the BLM field office in Challis)**. All routes in this proposal comply with existing Forest Service and BLM management direction. The proposed routes are also compliant with the

existing travel management plan for the Challis National Forest and is compliant with the BLM Resource Management Plan. In addition, letters of support were gathered from the Lost River Highway Department, Butte and Custer county commissioners, and the cities of Arco, Mackay, and Challis.

Though IDPR is spearheading the effort, it is IDPR's position that the trail system be managed jointly, as a Recreation Trailway through an MOU between IDPR, USFS, and BLM with direct involvement of a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) to be appointed to assist the public agencies with ongoing management efforts. Staff from the USFS, BLM, and IDPR would appoint these positions.

Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

The CAC would be comprised of individuals from different user and interest groups and interested individuals who reside near the area. It is IDPR's belief that this committee would include local land owners, and business owners, representatives of conservation groups, and members of motorized recreational user groups. In addition, we believe the CAC would include representatives from each of the three primary communities of Challis, Mackay, and Arco linked by the Recreation Trailway. The CAC will review Steering Committee data and management proposals, make recommendations to the Steering Committee on management issues and administrative rules governing the Recreation Trailway and travel management.

State and Local Government Involvement

Communities will be asked to provide route designations, provide

maintenance, assist with enforcement on roads and trails within their respective jurisdictions and manage access from service points within their communities to county roads and trailheads that provide access to the Recreation Trail Way.

Counties and Road Districts will also be asked to provide route designations, assist with enforcement on roads and trails within their respective jurisdictions, and manage access from service points within communities to trailheads that provide access to the Recreation Trail Way via county roads.

The Idaho Department of Transportation Board will be asked to work with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Board to develop legislative authority for the ITD Board to permit the designated trail to include the use of some state road. This authority will permit OHV access within and across state controlled access highway Rights of Ways that have been designated as part of a Recreation Trailway corridor by the Idaho Parks and Recreation Board.

Operating Plan

Recreation Trail Way Corridor Management

Although base line inventories are not yet complete, indications are that approximately 3000+/- miles of roads

and trails, currently open to OHV use, exist in the greater Lost River Basin Area. That 3000+/- miles of roads and trails encompasses approximately a 3500 square mile area located in Custer and Butte Counties in Central Idaho. The Recreation Trailway Corridor that the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation is proposing to be designated in this area, includes a main loop of approximately 300 miles that will provide linkage to the three primary



service point communities and approximately 200 miles of side loops and spurs that will encompass scenic destinations and points of interest to the trail system. The main loop will provide the OHV user improved access to a community based

service centers, a number of historical mining sites and scenic viewpoints currently popular with OHV users. Management improvements include: official mapping, developed trailhead access points in communities and at major road intersections, educational and interpretive materials and trail signing including distance, degree of difficulty, noxious weed, responsible use, wildlife awareness information, travel management and public land use restrictions that will be enforced within the management corridor. The corridor is proposed to extend one mile from either side of any route designated as Recreation Trailway.

The key element of the Recreation Trailway Corridor is the additional management, maintenance and enforcement staff resources, that will be assigned by

IDPR to those routes designated as part of the Recreation Trailway. The Department of Parks and Recreation, as managers of the program funds generated from the registration of ATVs and Motorbikes, with the support of OHV users are committed to allocating the resources needed to ensure the long term success of this proposal, including budgeting for adequate manpower, equipment, operating and development costs.

Management of the Trail surface

Existing surface materials vary a great deal on roads and trails within the project area. IDPR is anticipating that improvements will need to be made to some sections of the trail surface along the Recreation Trailway corridor to minimize dust problems. Similarly, routine schedules for maintaining roads and trails included in the trailway will also need to be modified to meet the expectations of current and future users. Vehicle cattle guards and OHV fence crossings will be added to the route as needed to minimize the need for trail users to open and close livestock management gates.

Management of use within the trail corridor

Recreation Trailway users will be closely managed when operating within the designated trail system corridor. IDPR staff will be assigned, as needed, to supplement available staff from the land managing agencies to maintain an acceptable level of direct contact with the user public. IDPR staff assigned, through the partnership MOU will be authorized to issue citations for infractions for violations of rules established for the Recreation Trailway. A user driven

reporting system encouraging citizen reporting of violations, similar to the Citizens Against Poaching (CAP) program, administered by the Department of Fish and Game will be developed as will a volunteer trail ambassador program for the trail. Signing and information brochures will be developed for trailheads, intersections and assurance signing along the trail corridor that will reinforce responsible use, will be included in the initial development. Maintenance of all informational signing placed will be a major function of staff assigned to the trail as will be the strict compliance enforcement of travel restrictions established within the corridor intended to curtail route proliferation associated with cross country travel. One area that needs additional review is the issue of the best management practices with respect to permitted travel within the trail corridor related to authorized dispersed camping and other permitted land uses.

Initial Development

A Phased Approach

IDPR is proposing that the main loop of approximately 300 miles connecting the communities of Challis, Mackay and Arco serve as the starting point for the initial development of the Recreation Trail Way. Development beyond the main 300-mile loop should be determined through recommendations from the CAC to the Steering Committee, through the adaptive management approach. We have also identified with our proposal several side loops and spur routes that could add variety and interest to the trail system that will add approximately another 200 miles to the Recreation Trailway. These sections will need to be further evaluated by the CAC

and Steering Committee.

A start up budget in the amount of, \$172,500 has been established for the trail system. These funds would be for the initial capital outlay of parking facilities, restroom facilities, information kiosks, cattle guards, OHV fence crossing, information signs, educational materials and mapping as well as other needs. Additional funds have been set aside in the motorbike fund that could be made available to successfully establish the Recreation Trailway if needed. This does not include assistance by the Trail Ranger and Trail Cat Programs provided by IDPR East Region Office, which could be used to improve some existing routes with erosion or surfacing issues.

Linkage with Community Services

We will primarily be depending on Communities and the private sector to provide services such as food, lodging, campgrounds, fuel stops, and other essential services needed by the user public.

Operation and Maintenance

IDPR oversight and management for the Recreation Trailway would come from the Land of the Yankee Fork State Park in Challis. Staff from the park, as well as additional Trail Rangers hired and assigned to the trail system would assist with enforcement, maintenance, and education routinely during the months the trail is in operation and open for use and periodically during those months the trail or sections of the trail is closed for wintering wildlife or other trail management purposes. Schedules would be established to focus on the primary user periods when the trail is open for use including weekends and holidays. Lev-

els of use and the overall size of the system will dictate the amount of resources allocated to this project. As this trail includes roads and trails currently under the management of the USFS, BLM, Butte and Custer counties, and the Lost River Highway District, these entities would also be expected to share some of their resources in a focused management effort with the resources already mentioned from IDPR. The Recreation Trailway, as proposed will offer a different type of challenge for land managers, as well as IDPR, as it is primarily consists of roads open to full-size vehicles. These public agencies will need to work closely together to address additional maintenance cycles required because of the designation of the trailway upon existing roadways.

Signing

One of the most important aspects of maintaining the trail system is signing. These signs will need to be consistent throughout the system, and be both informational and regulatory in nature

Considering the vast amount of road and trail intersections, signs at each of these intersections will need to be present. In addition, recommendations from the CAC and Steering Committee will determine other signing needs. Public agencies will need to work closely together to address additional safety sign needs required because of the designation of the trailway upon existing roadways. Other considerations for future signs that will need to be determined include: assurance markers (carsonite posts), Information/directional signs, regulatory signs, caution/hazard signs and difficulty ratings on trails, call boxes and area location maps.

Mapping

All maps produced for the Lost River Recreation Trailway should be GPS compatible, copywritten and strictly controlled by the Steering Committee. In this way there will be only one official map that will be dated with most current information included, such as travel restrictions, and special orders. The sale of all official maps will be handled by IDPR through local businesses, with the proceeds earmarked to go toward offsetting maintenance and operating costs of the recreation trailway.

Enforcement

The 2003 Idaho Legislature authorized the Director of the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation to delegate authority to issue citations for Parks and Recreation infractions within the boundary of lands managed by the Department. The Department is proposing to enter into a Management Agreement with the partner land management agencies that includes the management of recreational use within the main loop of the proposed Lost River Recreation Trailway including the enforcement of IDAPA rules approved and established for the Trailway. As the CAC recommends and the Steering Committee approves to add additional routes to the Lost River Recreation Trailway, IDPR will agree to accept management responsibility for recreational use within the

extended corridor.

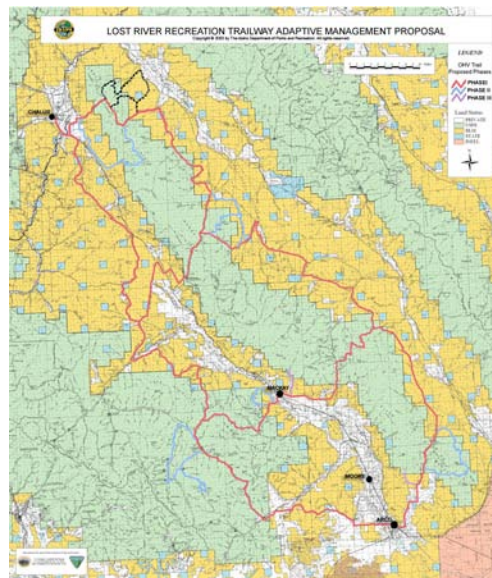
Education

One of the most critical components of this management strategy is education of the users. To date, many of the problems and conflicts associated with OHV use throughout the state can be traced to a lack of user education and awareness of land stewardship. IDPR is in the process of addressing this problem. This would be accomplished three ways.

The first effort will be through an IDPR sponsored OHV education class. IDPR staff has been working with Utah Parks and Recreation, the ATV Safety Institute, and the National Off-Highway Vehicle Council to develop a curriculum for OHV users. This course will serve as a primary building block for teaching proper land use, and important programs such as the nationally recognized *Tread Lightly!*.

IDPR anticipates having this course in place by January of 2004.

The second part of the education process will be through IDPR staff assigned to the trail system. These staff would have the primary responsibility for on the ground, direct contact with trail users, with education and awareness being the focus of their efforts. These positions would be staffed from May through November of the year, and would patrol and monitor the trail system along with personnel from the land management and county agencies. As the management of the trail system is adaptive in nature, IDPR would allow for increased staff as needs dictate.



The third part of the education equation would include accurate trail maps and informative brochures. This material will not only educate the user, but will instruct proper trail etiquette. IDPR proposes to include the previously mentioned elements of *Tread Lightly!*, travel plan awareness, and other state campaigns such as IDFG's *Citizens Against Poaching (CAP)* programs into printed brochures available at kiosks along the route.

Search and Rescue

Search and Rescue considerations will need additional discussion as the trail system is developed. As incidents increase new partnerships will need to be developed to address the need for critical response to trail related search and rescue incidents

Monitoring

The adaptive management approach allows the CAC and Steering Committee to actively manage the trail system based on the information collected, subsequent monitoring and actual performance of the initial management strategies implemented.

Information collected from the baseline data will serve as a guide for the CAC and Steering Committee to help direct management efforts. In addition to the issues identified previously, decisions regarding corridor width, trailhead locations, route length, route location,

phased approach of additional trails, camping, noxious weed management, corridor restrictions and private land re-routes will continually be updated through the CAC and Steering Committee.

Summary

It seems evident to the state and federal agencies charged with the responsibility to manage the land and recreation opportunities for the public, that OHVs are and will forever more, be a part of the landscape of Idaho. The number of machines and their users increase each year. The question is how do we as public agencies work cooperatively together to deal with this exponential growth. Many strategies have been tried throughout the west, with everything from complete closure to no management at all. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation believes the best answer is to

become aggressively invested in the improved management of the use of these machines on public lands.

Focusing use into a more heavily managed area, with oversight from community members, user and conservation groups and agency representatives seems the best way to meet the challenge before all of us. Individually, none of us has the resources to deal



with the magnitude of issues facing us, but a cooperative effort in an adaptively managed arena such as this, brings to bear the best knowledge, resources and management practices of all those seeking a solution to the problem.

IDPR believes that we have shown our commitment to this challenge through the considerable efforts we have invested to date through the public input and agency coordination effort, as well as the monetary resources we have committed. We now ask that you do the same in evaluating the merit of our proposal, and joining us in this management effort.

APPENDIX I

